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AUTHOR Frazer, Linda H.
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ABSTRACT

Evaluations of two Austin (Texas) Independent School District (AISD) programs are contained in this report: (1) The School-Community Guidance Center (SCGC); and (2) The Transitional Academic Program (TAP). SCGC is a program serving incorrigible and delinquent students at two locations: the F. R. Rice Secondary School and the Travis County Juvenile Detention Center. A total of 993 students were served in 1986-87. Follow-up was made of the attendance, achievement, and drop-out rate of the 401 AISD students at Rice. At the end of the year 82% remained in school, and attendance at the home school increased, but only 38% had a passing grade-point average in the home schools. Project specialists provided these high risk students services in the area of school attendance, academic achievement, disruptive behavior, and contact with the courts. The report follows a question and answer format with both text and graphics utilized to report student characteristics and program results. The second program reported, TAP, served students referred for academic problems. These students needed to pass promotion requirements for grades seven and eight while also taking courses at higher levels. Two secondary schools (grades 7-12) were sites for this program. The total TAP enrollment during 1986-87 was 290 students. Students were assigned to TAP for one semester. Ninety percent of the students eligible for mid-year promotion were promoted. (MDE)

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LAUNCHING TOWARD SUCCESS: THE SCHOOL-COMMUNITY GUIDANCE CENTER AND THE TRANSITIONAL ACADEMIC PROGRAM EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AUTHOR: Linda H. Frazer

OTHER CONTACT PERSON: Nancy Baenen Schuyler

The School-Community Guidance Center (SCGC) employed three project specialists to work with incorrigible and delinquent students at two locations--AISD's F.R. Rice Secondary School and Travis County's Gardner House Detention Center. SCGC was designed to help these high-risk students in the areas of school attendance, academic achievement, disruptive behavior, and contacts with the courts.

The Transitional Academic Program (TAP) operated at Rice and Robbins to enable retainees to take eighth- and ninth-grade courses while completing seventh- and eighth-grade promotion requirements.

MAJOR FINDINGS

1. In 1986-87, 401 students were served by SCGC at Rice with 592 served at Gardner House (352 AISD and 101 non-AISD students). Thus, a total of 993 students were served during this year compared to 880 last year. In addition, 128 students received follow-up services compared to 74 the previous year. The number served increased despite a late start this year.

2. At the end of 1986-87, of the 401 Rice students who were enrolled at any time during 1986-87, 324 (81%) remained in school and 42 (10%) dropped out. Of those 198 enrolled in SCGC in spring, 1986, 45% had dropped out of school by July, 1987.

3. The attendance of AISD students referred to Rice declined slightly while at Rice but increased slightly after they returned to their home school. Most of those referred had high absence rates prior to going to Rice; those exceeding the maximum of five unexcused absences to earn course credit had little incentive to improve grades and attendance until the beginning of the next semester.

4. The percentage of Rice students with passing grade point averages (GPA) declined once they returned to their home schools. Of the 122 students for whom grade information was available, only 64 (52%) had a passing GPA at Rice and only 46 (38%) had a passing GPA after returning to their home school.

5. Of students originally enrolled in TAP during the fall semester, 82% were able to be promoted midyear. TAP students' absence rates increased substantially after they were promoted and went to high schools. A group of Robbins students who were promoted but stayed at Robbins for the second semester had a lower absence rate than those who left.

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THE SCHOOL-COMMUNITY GUIDANCE CENTER
1986-87 FINAL REPORT

The School-Community Guidance Center (SCGC) employed three project specialists who served as liaisons between AISD, the juvenile justice system, various community service agencies, and at-risk students. The term "at-risk" referred to young people who fell into one or more of the following categories:

- Engaged in delinquent conduct,
- Did not function acceptably in school, and
- Adjudicated.

Adjudication included those who had merely had contact with juvenile justice authorities as well as young people actually arrested and detained. All of these were judged to be likely to drop out of school if they had not dropped out already.

In addition to liaison and referral services, the project specialists also offered counseling, tutoring, and monitoring. The objectives of the SCGC program focused on these four goals:

- Increase school attendance,
- Improve academic achievement,
- Decrease disruptive behaviors, and
- Reduce contacts with court authorities.

Two project specialists were assigned to F.R. Rice Secondary School, AISD's alternative education center for students who were removed from their home school due to incorrigible conduct. At Rice, all students and their parents or guardians met with the project specialists and enrolled simultaneously in the school **and** SCGC.

The third project specialist served the youth at Gardner House, the Travis County Juvenile Detention Center. In addition to counseling, all residents (students and non-students alike) were provided a structured education program designed to incorporate academic, vocational, and practical life skills. AISD students detained at Gardner House were eligible for school attendance credit through participation in the SCGC specialist's classes.

SCGC also provided funds for three part-time specialists to work during the summer of 1987. Two were assigned to the summer school campuses (Fulmore Junior High and Travis High School) and one to Gardner House. Services provided for summer school consisted mainly of calls to parents of students with absences or excessive tardies, although counseling, tutoring, and monitoring were also offered. The Gardner House specialist continued with an instructional program much the same as the one conducted throughout the 1986-87 school year.

SPECIALISTS' ACTIVITIES

WHAT SERVICES DID THE SPECIALISTS AT RICE PROVIDE?

The project specialists provided a wide variety of services to students including counseling, tutoring, and monitoring (grades, attendance, and discipline referrals). The supervisor of SCGC (who was also the principal at Rice) agreed with the specialists that their most important duty was to counsel with individuals. The project specialists also had played the role of liaisons between students and school administrators, teachers, juvenile court officials, and social service agencies. Many of their activities benefitted both students and staff at Rice. For example, the project specialists:

- Attended and participated in the school's Referral, Recommendation, and Review committee meetings to give background information, and brainstorm techniques for dealing with specific students;
- Provided speakers for the weekly assemblies;
- Organized a system of behavior, attendance, and academic awards;
- Supervised during lunch and breaks;
- Made daily attendance calls; and
- Offered support and professional expertise to teachers.

Project specialists interacted with the parents and guardians of SCGC students in several different ways, including the following:

- As a step in the enrollment process at Rice, students and their parents and guardians met with the project specialists to discuss the school's rules, procedures, and philosophy.
- Any time a student missed school, the specialists called home to find out the reason and to emphasize the importance of regular attendance.

The project specialists had frequent, regular contacts with probation and parole officers, lawyers, social workers, and other court officials and on occasion attended court hearings with adjudicated youth.

WHAT SERVICES DID THE SPECIALIST AT GARDNER HOUSE PROVIDE?

While the specialists assigned to Rice School spent most of their time on monitoring and counseling activities, the Gardner House specialist functioned most frequently as a teacher and instructional coordinator. Juveniles at the detention facility were already supplied with social workers, probation officers, dormitory workers, and other adults who provided counseling and guidance. Prior to the institution of SCGC, however, no regular, organized classes were available to these youth during their detention. Examples of the instruction offered by the specialist included the following:

Basic academic skills - Reading, writing, and mathematics work was geared to the individual's level of ability.

Career education - Both employers and employees from various fields discussed their occupations and the necessary training. A unit was also used which provided easy-to-read "career biography" booklets that described the lives of successful people in a variety of fields.

Recreation - Daily recreational activities were organized and scheduled.

Arts and crafts - Materials were available to give the students a chance to express themselves visually and creatively. At the same time, they had an opportunity to discuss feelings, events, and ideas in a relaxed non-threatening situation.

Life skills - Guest speakers, books, and films presented information on family and financial planning, child abuse prevention, and mental and physical health.

The most important activities, the project specialist believed, were those focused on adolescent growth and development and values. These touched on the neglected aspects of their education which directly affected their daily lives. Anatomy, physiology, sexuality, and teenage pregnancy were of immediate interest.

As was the case at Rice, representatives of community agencies were regularly asked to address the young people and provided information that was needed or of interest. The project specialist also coordinated the services of area college and high school student interns, dormitory workers, and volunteers.

It is notable that so many of the youth who participated in SCGC at Gardner House, 139 of 592 (23.5%), were not enrolled in **any** school. The project specialist reported that the classroom setting allowed these dropouts an opportunity to succeed and, perhaps, develop an interest in returning to school or requesting information on how they could seek a

General Education Diploma (GED). The classes benefitted the 453 AISD students, too. The project specialist reported class attendance to the District so that students could receive school credit despite their detention. Students were also able to work on school assignments and avoid falling so far behind that they would be unable to catch up with their classes after being released from custody.

WHAT OTHER SOURCES DID SCGC EMPLOY?

Project specialists frequently referred students to community agencies for additional help or support. Some of the sources utilized are listed in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1
AGENCIES UTILIZED BY SCGC

Alcoholics Anonymous
Austin Community College
Austin State Hospital
Charter Lane Hospital
Creative Rapid Learning Center
Delinquency Prevention Division-Juvenile Court System
Department of Human Services-Children's Protective Services
Gardner House Division
Gary Job Corps
Huston-Tillotson College
Mental Health-Mental Retardation
Pebble Project-Child Abuse Center
Planned Parenthood of Austin
Shoal Creek Hospital
South Austin Youth Services
Spectrum Emergency Shelter
Texas Youth Council
Travis County Health Department
Vernon Drug Treatment Center
Youth Advocacy Program
Youth Employment Services

Also: clinical psychologists, ministers, parole officers, private counselors, probation officers, and social workers

WHAT INSERVICE TRAINING DID THE SPECIALISTS RECEIVE?

Staff development in 1986-87 came in several forms. Because it would have been impractical for SCGC to sponsor workshops for only three project specialists, most of the sessions they attended included topics of interest to the rest of the faculty at Rice as well. The school invited guest speakers to address them, and sometimes members of the staff took turns sharing their own special knowledge. The weekly assemblies arranged for the students were also of interest and usefulness to the specialists. A sampling of the inservice training subjects presented includes:

- Motivation video lessons,
- Suicide prevention,
- Child abuse,
- Planning an academic program for students with unacceptable behavior problems,
- Discipline management,
- Managing student behavior (good and bad),
- Stress management,
- Conflict mediation.

The specialists assigned to Rice also attended the School Professional and Personal Renewal and Information Conference. A psychologist was included in the staff at Rice and was always available to the specialists and students. In the future, the specialists would like to have the opportunity to attend additional workshops provided by the District.

WHAT WAS THE COST OF THE PROGRAM?

SCGC was funded by a grant from the Texas Education Agency under the authority of Article III, House Bill 20, Appropriations Bill of the 69th Texas Legislature. The budget of $92,030 for the 1986-87 school year was divided into $15,084 for Gardner House, $76,946 for Rice, and $7,970 for summer school. Number of students served in summer school is not yet available.

Gardner House served a large number of students (592) for a short period of time (average 6.5 days) while Rice's 401 students generally stayed until the end of the semester of enrollment. The cost was $25 per student for Gardner House and $192 per student for Rice. It is difficult to breakdown further the cost of these programs because enrollment fluctuates. (NOTE: These figures do not reflect the number of students served during summer school in 1987.)

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

WHAT WERE THE THREE CATEGORIES OF STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN SCGC?

Students were divided into three categories according to the extent of their participation in SCGC: served, enrolled, and entered.

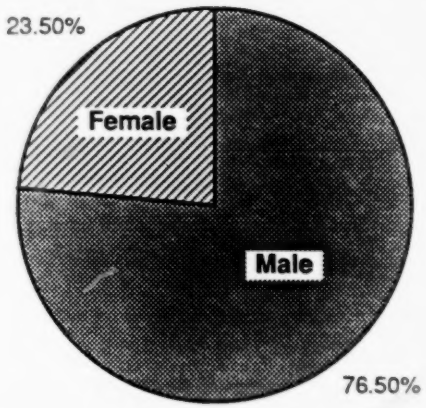
- "Served" students were served by SCGC during the 1985-86 school year and contacted by the project specialists in the spring of 1987 to determine their school status for follow-up evaluation.
- "Enrolled" students attended F.R. Rice Secondary School and were contacted regularly and participated fully in the program in 1986-87.
- Juveniles at Gardner House were "entered" in 1986-87 into the project specialist's log when they attended the classes offered there.

In 1986-87, SCGC served 128 students; enrolled 401; and entered 592 for a total of 1,121. Last year, SCGC served 74, enrolled 245, entered 635, for a total of 954. Thus, the numbers overall increased 17% despite the late start. Inceases can be attributed to Rice.

WHAT WAS THE GENDER BREAKDOWN OF THE STUDENTS IN SCGC?

Males outnumbered females in all three categories. Overall, there were 858 (76.5%) males and 263 (23.5%) females in SCGC. Figure 2 shows the proportional breakdown by sex.

FIGURE 2
Total Student Distribution by Sex



WHAT WAS THE ETHNIC BREAKDOWN OF THE STUDENTS IN SCGC?

The ethnic breakdown of the 1,121 SCGC students was Anglo 277 (24.7%), Hispanic 468 (41.8%), and Black 369 (32.9%). No American Indians or Alaskan natives were served, enrolled, or entered. One Asian was served, six were entered, and 0 were enrolled. Figures 3, 4, and 5 show the breakdown of the three major ethnic groups overall, for Rice only, and for Gardner House. It is interesting to note that the percentage of Anglo students served was greater at Gardner House than Rice.

FIGURE 3
SCGC Students by Ethnicity: Total

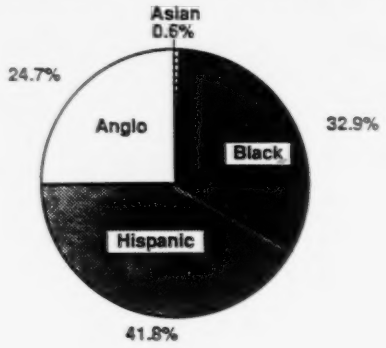


FIGURE 4
SCGC Students by Ethnicity: Rice

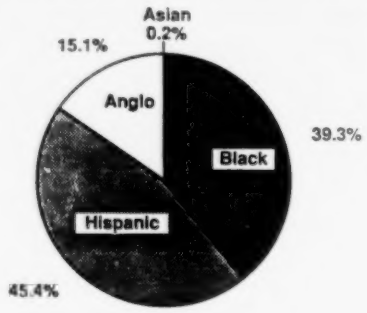
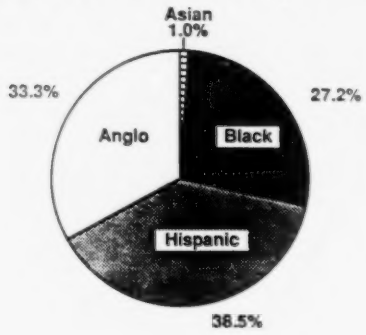


FIGURE 5
SCGC Students by Ethnicity: Gardner



WHAT WAS THE ETHNIC BREAKDOWN BY GRADE OF THE STUDENTS IN SCGC?

Overall Hispanics represented the largest group of students in SCGC both at Rice and Gardner House. However, there was a difference in ethnic groups by grade. Hispanics contributed the most to the seventh grade and declined rapidly thereafter, while Blacks and Anglos peaked in the ninth grade. The breakdown of ethnicity by grade is shown in Figure 6 (Gardner) and Figure 7 (Rice).

FIGURE 6

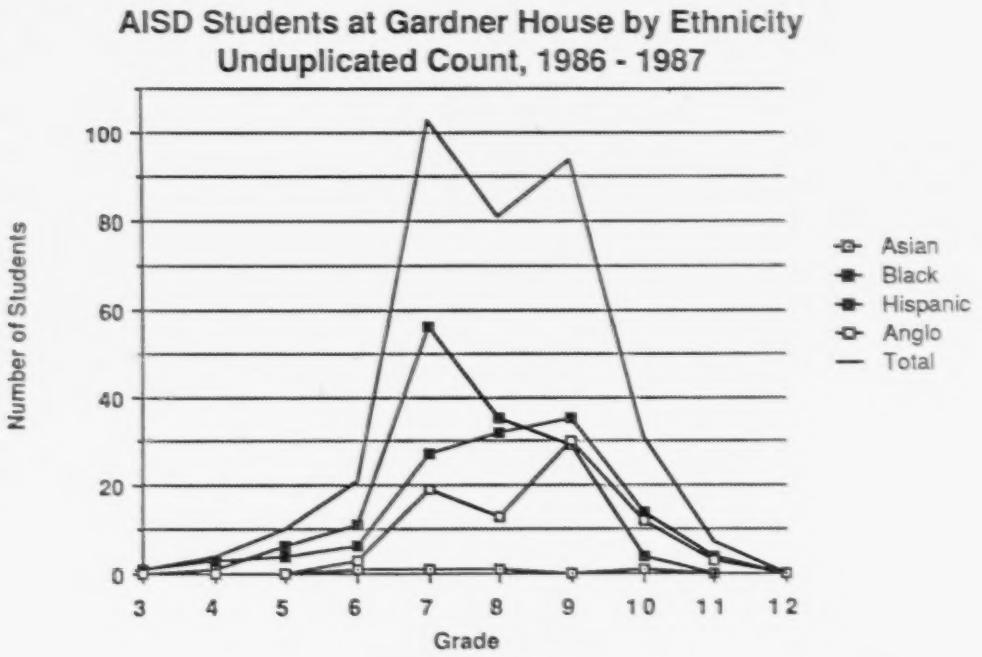
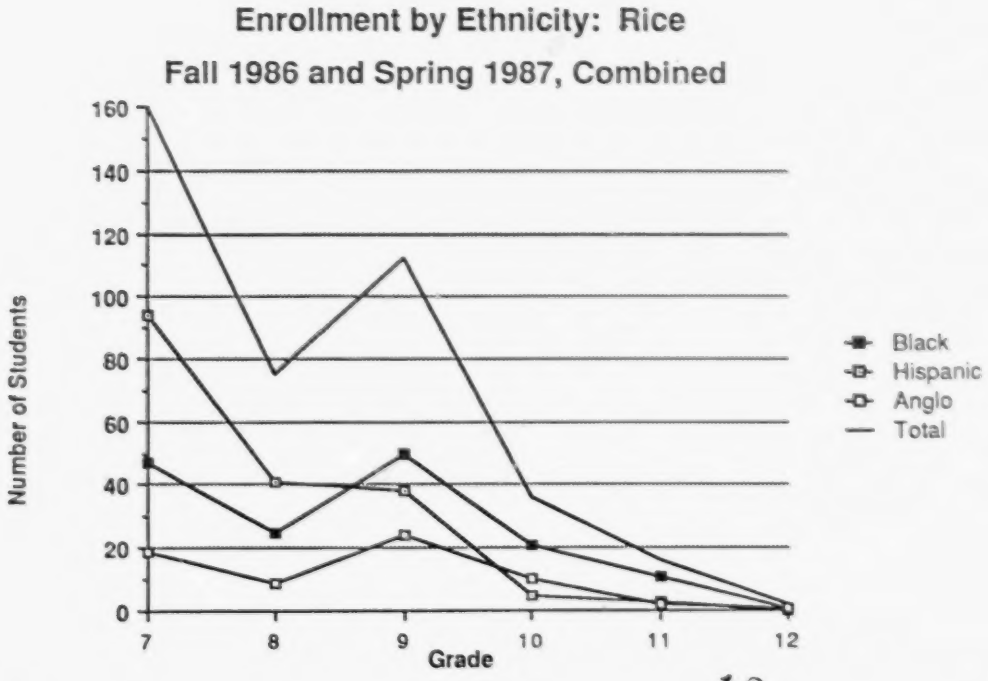


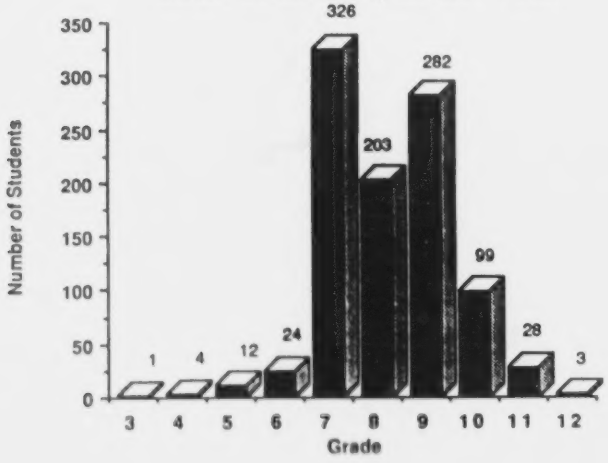
FIGURE 7



HOW MANY STUDENTS WERE THERE AT EACH GRADE LEVEL IN SCGC?

Frequency by grade data were available on the 982 students who were enrolled in any school district. This included the 128 who were served in the spring of 1985-86, the 401 who were enrolled at Rice in 1986-87, and those entered at Gardner House, (352 were from AISD and 101 were from other school districts). The remaining 139 adolescents entered at Gardner House were dropouts. Figure 8 shows the frequency by grade for all 817 SCGC students enrolled in AISD schools (unduplicated, 64 were enrolled across semesters).

FIGURE 8
SCGC Students by Grade: Total



FOR WHAT LENGTH OF TIME DID STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN SCGC?

Students enrolled in SCGC at Rice stayed until the end of that semester. This meant that some remained for 18 weeks and others for only a few days. Residents at Gardner House were even more transient. A young person might be brought in on a Friday and released the following Monday or live there for a number of months, depending on the circumstances leading to the detention. Figure 9 shows the average length of stay at Gardner House.

FIGURE 9
AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY AT GARDNER HOUSE

6.50 days	average
5.74 days	average for AISD enrolled students
5.36 days	average for non-AISD enrolled students
10.68 days	average for AISD dropout students
7.99 days	average for non-AISD dropout students.

FOR WHAT REASONS WERE STUDENTS REFERRED TO SCGC?

Students were referred to SCGC because they had committed one or more of a wide variety of offenses. Figure 10 shows the frequencies of these offenses for students enrolled at Rice; insubordination and fighting were the most common. Figure 11 provides the same information for children entered at Gardner House; runaways and burglaries were most common. The two have been separated due to the differences in the severity of the acts committed although there is some overlap. Some of the juveniles were referred for more than one reason.

FIGURE 10
OFFENSES BY FREQUENCY FOR SCGC STUDENTS ENROLLED AT RICE 1986-87

Offense	Frequency
Insubordination	207
Fighting	122
Truancy	108
Obscene language	67
Violation of drug abuse policy (first offense)	53
Excessive tardiness	49
Detention, missed or excessive	46
Unexcused absences	40
Assault	34
Theft	29
Possession of weapons	14
Vandalism	13
Repeated violation of drug abuse policy	9
Arson	4
Gambling	3
Possession of fireworks	2
*Other	9

* "Other" includes one count of each of these: emotional behavior, extortion, gang activities, intimidation of student, sexual misconduct, shoplifting, spraying a fire extinguisher, trespassing, and unlawful entry.

Many of these offenses were not committed in school; however, the District's interest in the students goes beyond school hours and includes their overall ability to function in society and their growth as individuals. SCGC was designed to help teenagers avoid adjudication, which meant the delinquent behaviors leading to criminal prosecution had to be addressed.

FIGURE 11
OFFENSES BY FREQUENCY FOR SCGC STUDENTS ENTERED AT GARDNER HOUSE 1986-87

Offense	Frequency
Runaway	107
Burglary	109
*Assault	74
Violation of lawful court appearance	55
Theft-$20 to less than $200	54
Unauthorized use of a motor vehicle	53
Parole violation	49
Robbery	33
Assault on a school official	28
Possession of a controlled substance, possession of marijuana, minor in possession	26
Burglary of a vehicle	25
Theft less than $20	21
Aggravated robbery	18
Unlawfully carrying a weapon	17
Theft-$750 to less than $20,000	15
Murder	11
Criminal mischief with property damage $200-$749	8
Warrant failure to appear	8
Public intoxication	7
Sexual assault, aggravated sexual assault	7
Theft from a person	7
Evading arrest	6
Indecency with a child	6
Arson	5
Criminal mischief with property damage $20-$199	5
Credit card abuse	5
Inhalant abuse	5
Escape from custody	4
Fictitious name	4
Theft-$200 to less than $750	4
Attempted burglary	3
Disorderly conduct	3
Possessing prohibited weapons	3
Possession of drug paraphernalia	3
Resisting arrest	3
Kidnapping	2
Prostitution	2
**Other	12

* "Assault" includes simple and aggravated assaults, assault with injury, and assault by threat.

** "Other" includes one count of each of the following: arson with bodily injury, courtesy supervision, criminal mischief with property damage under $20, driving while intoxicated, false alarm/disruption of program, forgery, injury to child/elderly person, retaliation, tampering with identification number, terroristic threat, vandalism, and violation of city ordinance

FOLLOW-UP

All students assigned to Rice are at high risk for dropping out of school. If a student has withdrawn from school and a transfer request from another institution has not been received, then AISD considers the student a dropout. A follow-up study on dropping out was conducted on all 198 students enrolled in Rice during spring, 1986. It was found that:

- By the end of the spring, 1986 semester 12 (6%) students had dropped out.
- By the fall, 1986 semester a total of 35 (18%) students had dropped out.
- By the beginning of spring, 1987 semester 66 (33%) students had dropped out.
- By July, 1987 90 (45%) students had dropped out.

Thus, while at Rice few students appeared to drop out. However, rates escalated once students returned to their home school. Almost one half of these students had dropped out one year after leaving Rice. Some of these students may have been enrolled in educational programs which did not grant a high school diploma. It is interesting to note, further, that of those students (56) returning to Rice at any time, 82% (46) were still in school. Of those 128 students who had no further contact with Rice 38% (48) remained in school.

For further follow-up information about the fall, 1986 students, see the SCGC Technical Report (Pub. No. 86.57).

ATTENDANCE

Attendance data were collected on 128 students who:

- Enrolled in SCGC during the spring, 1986 semester and 48 students who enrolled in SCGC during the fall, 1986 semester;
- Were eligible to return to their home school at the end of the semester; and
- Were still in school twelve weeks later.

The attendance rate while at Rice was slightly lower than before entry for each group, but the largest decline in the attendance rate occurred well before their enrollment in SCGC. The range of absences prior to attending in the fall of 1986 was 1-27. The average number of absences was 7.65. Eighty-seven percent of the spring, 1986 students and 69% of the fall, 1986 students **entering** Rice had **already exceeded** five absences for the semester. While it was not determined whether absences were excused or not, many students probably were close to or had exceeded the limit. This may help to explain why attendance decreased. New attendance rules prevent students from receiving credit after five **unexcused** absences. **The attendance rate increased for both groups after leaving SCGC.** See Figures 12a and 12b for attendance rates for students who exited from Rice.

GRADES

The follow-up study conducted on the 176* students who exited during 1986 and returned to their home schools for the following semester also included the following grade point average data:

	DURING RICE	AFTER RICE
Students with passing grade point averages	64 (52.5%)	46 (38%)
Students with failing grade point averages	58 (47.5%)	76 (62%)

*Grade information was not available on all students.

FIGURE 12a

Attendance Rates: Exited Rice Students Spring 1986

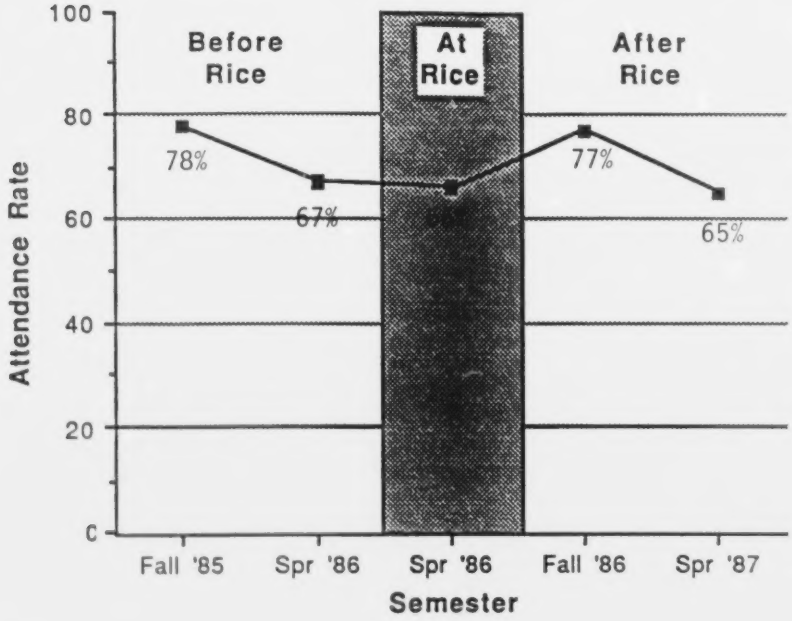
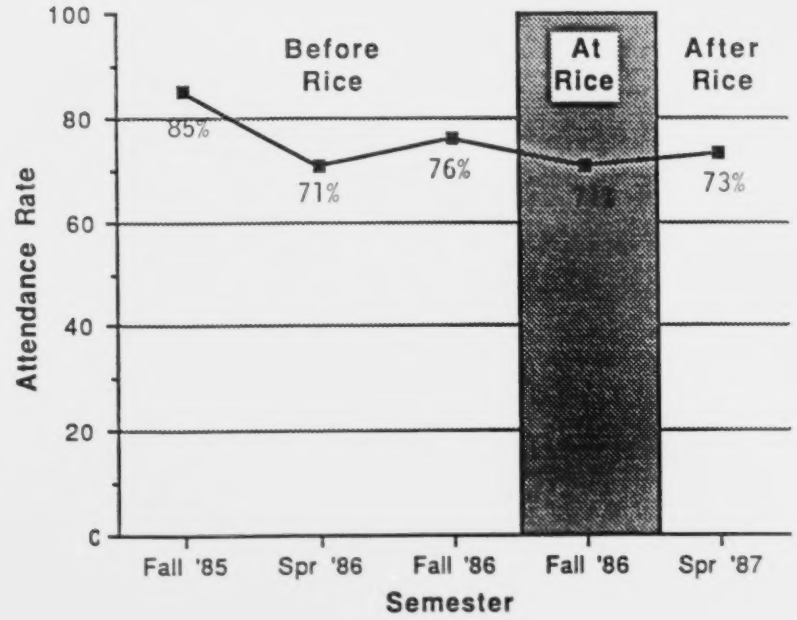


FIGURE 12b

Attendance Rates: Exited Rice Students Fall 1986



WHAT IS TAP?

SCGC counselors at Rice also had as part of their student population Transitional Academic Program (TAP) students referred for academic problems. The TAP allowed students to enroll in eighth- or ninth-grade courses while they repeated seventh- or eighth-grade courses which they had failed. The program was offered at F. R. Rice and W. R. Robbins secondary schools (grades 7-12) during the 1986-87 school year. To be promoted, TAP students had to meet the promotion standards for their grade.

Students were eligible if they:

- Were repeating grade 7 or 8 (with priority to eighth graders).
- Had attended summer school and were in need of additional grade points to be promoted.
- Were high-risk students who were identified as potential dropouts.

Students were assigned to the W. R. Robbins and F. R. Rice campuses for one academic semester. Students were enrolled in up to three of the four major academic courses to master prerequisite essential elements not completed during the previous school year. All completed course requirements were averaged with the previously earned credits in consideration of grade level promotion.

HOW MANY STUDENTS WERE ELIGIBLE?

According to rosters submitted by junior high principals, 172 students were eligible for the fall, 1986 semester and 242 students were eligible for the spring, 1987 semester.

WHAT WERE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TAP STUDENTS BY SCHOOL, GRADE, ETHNICITY, AND SEX?

In the fall, 48 students were enrolled in the TAP at Rice, 115 at Robbins. In the spring, 40 enrolled at Rice, 87 at Robbins, making the total TAP enrollment 290. However, five students at Rice and 10 at Robbins left before rosters were submitted in December, and no information is available on these students. Of the 275 remaining, 60% were male, 40% female. Forty-six percent were Hispanic, 30% Black, and 24% Anglo/Other. Of the 265 TAP students whose 1985-86 grade was listed on the 1986 Student Master File, 241 (91%) were eighth graders.

The following analyses of promotion and attendance include only those students who were enrolled in the TAP in the fall semester.

HOW SUCCESSFUL WAS THE TAP IN ENABLING STUDENTS TO EARN MIDYEAR PROMOTIONS?

Of the 163 students originally enrolled in the TAP in the fall, 15 returned to their junior highs before rosters were submitted in December. Of the 148 remaining, promotion status was known for all but one. Only 14 of the remaining 147 (10%) failed to be promoted; 13 of these 14 withdrew from AISD at or before the end of the semester. (If the 15 students who left earlier in the semester are included, the failure rate is 18%.)

HOW DID ATTENDANCE FOR TAP STUDENTS COMPARE BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER TAP PARTICIPATION?

Compared to their attendance the previous year, fall TAP students had slightly higher absence rates while in the TAP. Students who were enrolled in the TAP during the fall semester at Robbins and were then promoted and left Robbins were absent 11.7% of the days enrolled, while those at Rice were absent 12.4% of days enrolled. These students' absence rates the previous year were 10.5% and 9.6%, respectively.

However, both groups' absence rates increased substantially during the spring semester at their high schools. Students who had attended the TAP at Robbins were absent 23.1% of the days in the spring, while fall TAP students who attended Rice had a spring absence rate of 18.2%.

Interestingly, a group of 22 students who were enrolled in the fall TAP at Robbins, were promoted, and **stayed** at Robbins in the spring, had a lower absence rate in the spring than those who went to high schools (16.1%), although it was still higher than their rate during the TAP (9.8%).

FIGURE 13
ABSENCE RATES BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER TAP,
STUDENTS SERVED IN FALL WHO WERE PROMOTED.

	Robbins				Rice	
	Attended in Fall		Attended All Year		Attended in Fall	
Time	N	Absence Rate	N	Absence Rate	N	Absence Rate
Before (85-86)	67	10.5%	22	20.4%	35	9.6%
During (Fall '86)	69	11.7%	22	9.8%	36	12.4%
After (Sprg. '87)	69	23.1%	22	16.1%	36	18.2%

It is too early to draw firm conclusions about the effects of the TAP. The program did result in the promotion of a high percentage of the students involved. It is hoped that this will contribute to dropout prevention, a major long-term goal of the program. Attendance rates after leaving the program may indicate students need more continuing support. Proof of the program's success will come only much later, when graduation/dropout rates are known.

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Austin Independent School District

Department of Management Information

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